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Stories from the Book of Mormon: Lesson 2—Lehi's Travels to the New World

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Abstract: This lesson's objective was to show that belief in God is best evidenced by a willingness to serve and obey Him.

Questions and Suggestions for Study or Reports

In discussing this lesson on the statesmen, you may not agree with the author in his selection of the great statesmen of our country. Every American has his own favorites, and his opinion is respected, as he in turn respects the opinions of others. This right of preference is part of our American rights.

1. Find out from some good American history something additional about the lives of the following men: John

Marshall, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, and Abraham Lincoln. Find out something about Grover Cleveland, Wm. McKinley, and Woodrow Wilson.

2. Can you explain the causes of the Civil War?
3. What two great generals came to the front in that war?
4. Brigham Young was a great statesman. Why? Daniel H. Wells was also a great statesman. Find out something about his life.

Stories from the Book of Mormon

For optional use of Relief Societies in stakes and missions in countries other than the United States, in lieu of social science.

Lesson 2—Lehi's Travels to the New World

Tuesday, November 23, 1943

Note: For the full effect of this lesson it is imperative that the teacher and the members of the class have at hand the Book of Mormon.

Lesson Objective: To show that belief in God is best evidenced by a willingness to serve and obey Him.

In carrying forward the lessons under the title *Stories from the Book of Mormon* much can be gained by a study of the leading characters of this sacred record. One such character was Lehi. The history of a great nation was dependent upon his willingness to obey the will of God. He first appears upon the Book of Mormon scene as a righteous man who lived 600 years before the birth of the Savior, in the city of Jerusalem. This great city, this royal city, was ruled then by King Zedekiah whose kingdom was that of Judah. In name, Jerusalem was holy, for there had been built the Temple of the Lord.

"Its busy streets were crowded with a mixed multitude. Priests and Levites who officiated in the ordinances of the law of Moses, worshipers from the other tribes of Jacob, warriors of the armies of Judah, courtiers and attendants on the king, the merchants from Egypt, from Tyre and Sidon and from many other parts, artificers in various trades, all these combined to make it wealthy and renowned, a busy mart of trade, a center of civilization. . . ." (*Story of the Book of Mormon*, pp.20-22, by George Reynolds.)

Lehi, his heart not being set upon the riches of the world, looked with

unconcern upon the great treasures and fine adornments which had been brought to beautify the homes and great public buildings of this chief city in all Israel. People, he could see, because of their riches had forgotten the Lord. The prophets who came to warn were persecuted and sent away. Riotous living was sought after, and care or concern for the commandments of God brushed aside. Knowing the wrath of God, Lehi yearned to know His will as to the fate of this people. He was told that Jerusalem would be destroyed because of the iniquity of her inhabitants, and that many of her people would be carried off into captivity. Further did the Lord instruct him, that he too should go and warn the city of the disasters that would shortly come unless the people would repent. This Lehi did, only to meet with the same persecution as did other prophets before him. But because of Lehi's faithfulness the Lord spoke unto him in a dream saying: "Blessed art thou Lehi, because of the things thou hast done; and because thou hast been faithful and declared unto this people the things which I commanded thee, behold, they seek to take away thy life."

"And it came to pass," continues Lehi's son Nephi, "that the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness. And it came to pass that he was obedient unto the word of the Lord, wherefore he did as the Lord commanded him. And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things,

and took nothing with him save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness." (I Nephi 2:2-4)

Lehi's belief in the word of God was not a passive one. He put into practice the counsels of the Lord by showing a willingness to forsake all earthly things for the greater values of the spirit. With but enough provisions to sustain life, he took his family and traveled to the borders of the Red Sea. (Reynolds) In company with him was his wife Sariah, and also his sons Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. Other children are mentioned later, some of whom were born in the wilderness. Nephi, by nature a sweet and willing boy in following his father's wishes, soon found favor in the sight of God. Not long after finding a home in the wilderness for his family, Lehi again had a dream which he revealed to his son Nephi, saying: "Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem. For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of thy forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass. Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness. And now, behold thy brothers murmur, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord. Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of the Lord, because thou hast not murmured." (I Nephi 3:2-6)

It is mainly through the faithfulness and obedience of Nephi that the record of the Jews was obtained from Laban, which made it possible for Lehi and his family to have the word of God, for which, writes Nephi, did his father thank the God of Israel. Lehi knew that with God's word the nation to follow him should not dwindle and perish in unbelief. (I Nephi 4:13)

For purposes of this lesson which deals with the character of Lehi, it is necessary to omit many interesting details that happened to this man, his family, and Ishmael's family, as they traveled through the wilderness and over the ocean to the land of promise, a land choice above all other lands—the Americas. The highlights of this journey include the struggles that Lehi and his younger son Nephi had in keeping the spirit of humility present in the hearts of Laman and Lemuel. These sons found it difficult not to harden their hearts against God. It was mainly because of the rebellious acts of these brothers that the traveling, the building of a ship, the voyage across the great waters, and the need for cooperative living in the land of promise were made more difficult for Lehi. Much time and energy was lost in the corrections and rebukes which he frequently was called upon to administer to these two wayward sons.

Yet it was in these strivings toward the right that Lehi's character and steadfast faith took root and developed. His was a faith that resulted in works—a willingness of spirit that showed his belief in God through service. It was in this service that many of the plain and precious truths of the Gospel were explained in the

words of counsel which he gave his family. Because of the sweetness of his spirit, and because of the deep parental love he had for his own, he poured out his soul in words of earnest hope, relating again and again the dreams he had known through the grace of the Lord. No finer sermon has ever been preached than that to be found in I Nephi, chapter 8, entitled, "The dream of the tree, the river, and the rod of iron."

Answers to questions such as these which follow are made plain by Lehi's words describing his dream: Why are many people quick to see that faith, repentance, and baptism are the steps one takes to become a member of Christ's church, and yet why do so many fail to act upon their beliefs? Why are the great multitudes of men and women unable to understand the will of God?

After a brief class discussion of these questions have I Nephi, chapter 8, read. For further interpretation of Lehi's dream read also I Nephi 15:25-36.

Questions for Active Reading and Discussion

With the help of other suggested readings given below, have the class carry on the discussion as follows: first, answer the question; second, read the passage given to discover plain and precious truths of the Gospel brought to light in the Book of Mormon. If time permits, have each member of the class add a passage of his own selection from within that part of the Book of Mormon (I Nephi, and II Nephi, chapters 1 to 4) that tells of the life and words of Lehi—a passage that has brought new meaning to a Gospel truth.

1. Lehi and his seed were promised the land of America for their inheritance. He and his family worked hard to

realize this promise. America has ever demanded sacrifice from those who would seek its shores. Why? Read II Nephi 1:1-11.

The next question may be used if needed

for class activity, or it may be assigned for home study.

2. Why has God permitted joy and misery, and good and sin to be in this world? Read Lehi's explanation of "opposition in all things" to his son Jacob. (II Nephi, chapter 2.)

The Princess

(Continued from page 480)

lately. Right after the baby came John broke his leg so we've had doctor bills to pay. When the children are asleep, we let the fire go out. The clothes don't dry much till John makes the fire in the morning."

Still Lois could think of nothing to say.

"And then, you see, I have to iron them before Robin can get up."

She closed the ashpit door with her foot and sat down.

"I guess I'm fussy—but I'm afraid of damp clothes. Robin has never been very strong."

Suddenly Lois felt dazed and weak. She wondered if she would be able to stand. Her one desire was to get up and rush out.

At last she said in a meek, low tone, "I see. Don't worry about it." She got to her feet. "It doesn't matter if he is late. I'm sorry I made him feel bad today." She stopped because she could not keep her voice steady.

Mrs. Marshall got up too. She said, "Robin is so happy in school. He loves you. He tells me all about

your pretty clothes, even the color of your handkerchiefs. John and I sometimes tease him by calling you 'The Princess.'"

Then she looked a little embarrassed. "Only in fun, you know. We think the public school is the greatest thing in the world. It gives our child everything."

"No," Lois said, shaking her head. "No," more firmly, "It couldn't give him his sweet smile. You are the one who gave him that. And the schools couldn't do much either without homes like yours to back them up. It's people like you that have made America great."

She took hold of the doorknob, then turned back to Mrs. Marshall. Touching the baby's cheek lightly with her finger, she looked up suddenly into the mother's eyes, her own swimming. "And I think you have everything too," she said. "Everything a woman wants most."

Hastily she went out, closing the door softly. "Oh, God!" she prayed. "Make me worthy to be their Princess."

Short-story Article to Appear in September Issue

THE concluding article on short-story writing by Pearl Spencer which was scheduled to appear in the August issue of *The Relief Society Magazine* (see announcement June-July *Magazine*, page 394) will appear in the September issue of the *Magazine*.